

December 14, 2005

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Carlos Taboada. I am a teacher at Richmond High School. Ours is one of five high schools in the West Contra Costa Unified School District. Sixty eight percent of our student population is composed of Latino students. Fifty-five percent of the student's population is English Learner and the overwhelming majority of our students come from working class families. Sixty four percent of the student body is on free or reduced lunch and the median annual household income is forty thousand dollars.

The parent members of the English Learners Advisory Committee, their teachers and students have expressed themselves with one voice every time when asked to propose alternatives to the California High School Exit Exam. Their voice coincides with that of pedagogues, psychologists and educators: THE TEST MUST BE ADMINISTERED IN THE CHILD'S NATIVE LANGUAGE.

The application of the California High School Exit Exam to a population that is not fluent in English constitutes the use of a biased and invalid testing instrument. It makes sense that if a student cannot understand the questions asked in a test, the test is not a fair or valid tool. Psychologists, Counselors and other professionals involved in educational testing and assessment have integrated into their practice the notion that tests and other evaluation materials used to assess a child "should be provided and administered in the child's native language." (Excerpt from the Regulations Implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. 300.532). As presently administered to the more than 350 English Learners in RHS at the basic levels, the CAHSEE measures (and only by indirect inference) the child's English language skills while pretending to measure the student's ability and competence on a wider set of standards.

Speaking for the parents, students and teachers in our School and our community, and on behalf of the two hundred sixteen students who have not passed one or both parts of the exam, we demand fair and unbiased testing. The California High School Exit Exam will only deepen divisions in our society along clearly demarcated ethnic and linguistic lines. We should not take this dangerous step.

AQUI ESTAMOS
AQUI NOS QUEDAMOS
NO NOS VAMOS
ASI HABLAMOS!!!